



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

April 2, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time. In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
(1 Peter 3-8)

How true are these words from Saint Peter today! The trials we have faced this Lenten season and continue to face because of the COVID-19 pandemic are our moments of opportunity for spiritual advancement. Through such struggles, we strive toward sainthood.

Lent is a time to open ourselves to these challenges and create space for God to change us so that our lives reflect ever more intensely the light of his love. This year, in an unprecedented way, we have been given this opportunity. We can set aside our self-centeredness to focus on the common good and most vulnerable among us. Many of us exchanged our regular routines for schoolwork and business presentations from the kitchen table, a testing and strengthening of the domestic church. Most importantly, we have been reminded of our common belonging as brothers and sisters in the human family. Pope Francis has said, “it is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others.” (Urbi et Orbi, March 27, 2020)

Our experience of Holy Week will be different this year. But joined in a common spirit, we will enter into Christ’s passion and death in a new way. The struggles, sacrifices, and isolation we are facing right now can be joined with Christ on his journey to Calvary. Without Good Friday, there is no Easter Sunday. At the end of the journey is His glorious resurrection.

The celebration of the liturgies of Holy Week by our priests will preserve the sacredness and solemnity of this most holy time. I invite you to participate via livestream in all of the Holy Week liturgies which will be broadcast from the Cathedral of Saint Andrew on the diocesan website, grdiocese.org, and diocesan Facebook page. FOX 17 will broadcast the Palm Sunday and Easter Masses in the normal 10 a.m. timeslot. Additionally, our Good Friday liturgy will also be broadcast on FOX 17 at 3 p.m. that day.

This year, the joy of the Resurrection provides the hope that we are seeking. By Christ’s cross, we have been saved. By His cross, we have been redeemed. By His cross, we take hope in God’s

promise of eternal life! The risen Lord seeks out each one of us: sick or well, broken or whole. Let Him be your comfort and source of healing.

May you feel, day by day through prayer, the presence of the Risen Christ. Share the joy and the hope of His resurrection with all those you encounter – even if it is only through email, video chat and phone calls at this time.

May the peace of the Risen Lord be with you and your loved ones this Easter season and always!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. J. Walkowiak". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids